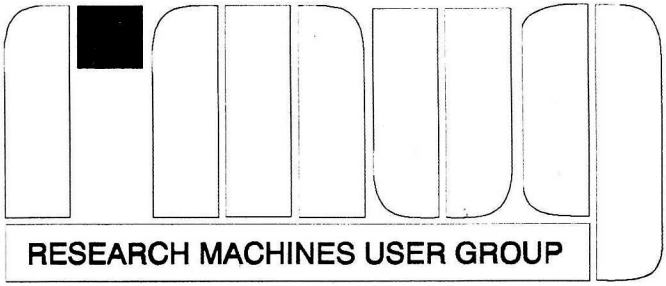
RM User

Volume 9:5
February 1995



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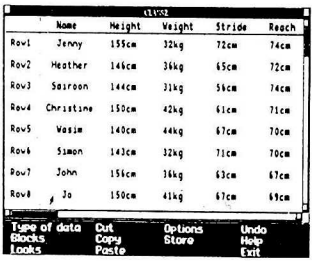

	Name	Height	Weight	Stride	Reach
Row1	Jenny	155cm	32kg	72cm	74cm
Row2	Heather	146cm	36kg	65cm	72cm
Row3	Sairoon	144cm	31kg	56cm	74cm
Row4	Christine	150cm	42kg	61cm	71cm
Row5	Wasim	140cm	44kg	67cm	70cm
Row6	Simon	143cm	32kg	71cm	70cm
Row7	John	156cm	36kg	63cm	67cm
Row8	Jo	150cm	41kg	67cm	69cm

Type of data Blocks Looks | Cut Copy Paste | Options Store | Undo Help Exit

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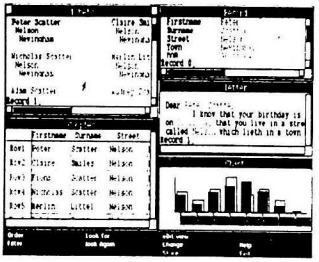

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Send for more information

HelpLine

The User Group exists to help its members use the computers which they have.

The magazine is the main way in which we communicate with our members. If you find that it's not covering the areas you want to know about then phone someone listed at the back and let them know what you would like to see; the chances are that you won't be the only person who has the same needs.

Many of you (about 20%) are home users of Nimbus computers and we would like to help you. Do please phone any of the people whose numbers are listed at the back of the magazine and we will do our best to help.

You may find that you have a problem which you feel is too trivial for Customer Support or you may have a problem with which they can't help, perhaps because you have a non-standard setup for your equipment or you are using third-party equipment. This is the time when we may be able to help.

Remember that you can telephone the User Group members in the evening or at weekends when RM is shut (and, of course, you are just bound to hit problems). Also, RM don't claim to have great knowledge of products which they don't produce such as Excel or PageMaker. They can tell you how to install the packages on their equipment and how to get started but they cannot be expected to give you in depth support on using the packages. We, on the other hand, can. Most of the people whose phone numbers are listed at the back are using a range of software which is probably the same as yours on a daily basis. We may have met exactly the problem you have just encountered.

If you are in difficulty, please ring anybody on the Committee (numbers at the back) and you may also phone Tim Phillips on 0284 706623 (home number).

It is a great help if you are having a problem doing something using your computer if you can be next to it when you phone because it may then be possible to talk you through a solution over the phone.

If your problem is not urgent, or you think it may be difficult to explain over the phone, then do please write to the Editor with your query. I will either reply to you directly or pass your query on to a better person to solve it or publish your letter in the next magazine as a request for help.

Lastly, please consider letting others know about this source of help! Last time I went to an RM presentation I made photocopies of the membership form on page 34 and passed them out to those who were interested. If you could do the same at any local IT events it would be very useful.

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Deadlines for the next issues

RM User 9:6 ..... *6 March 1995*
RM User 9:7 ..... *16 April 1995*

The date shown above is the ***latest*** *date for copy for the magazine. You will normally receive the magazine about 2-3 weeks after the date shown.*

Missing a Magazine?

Back issues of the magazine are available from the editor - please write for more details.

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News and Editorial

Greetings RM users. I cannot tell you how nervous I am about trying to fill Steve's shoes. He is certainly going to be a hard act to follow and I would like to start by saying thank-you to him for his work over the last four years. I have a promise that he will continue to contribute so we will still benefit from his awesome technical knowledge. The committee have also asked me to express their great appreciation for all his efforts.

I have also received the editor's archive which is a collection of earlier magazines (now stacked next to my collection of "Astounding Science Fiction"!) and I feel even more humbled by the extent to which people involved in the RM user group have pushed development in the world of IT. It may be a phenomenom like nostalgia but I also had a sense of people having a bit more time to sit and think or sit and experiment. I am sure I am not the only RM user who has a timetable that suffers from a constant, inexorable loading. Several past issues mention that a function (some say THE function) of the user group is to encourage RM to hone their output towards criteria which we, the users, know to be the most relevant. I would say also that we should even hope to be heard at levels where decisions are made about timetables and curriculum matters. A great deal has been written and said about IT and the latest version of the National Curriculum but I have seen very little about the need to quantify the amount of timetable time allowed for managing a network. I did inherit a document from a working party sponsored by the HMC which suggests a figure of 2.5% of a full timetable load should be released for each computer which you maintain. I do think that is a very optimistic figure but I do know of one or two schools where it is reached. I also know of a lot more schools where there is little recognition of there being any need to consider this matter. I even know one IT coordinator who teaches a full timetable, runs a large network spread across a large site and insists that he is not overworked. I DO like him but I don't believe he is from the same planet as the rest of us. If we are to have any say in this matter or to sway RM towards what we see as a good course, we must make ourselves heard. I believe this magazine is a good forum but it would be even better if your voice(s) are on view. Many back issues have asked you to contribute and now I ask you again. You must have opinions about the job and the tools we have or need. I know it takes time to communicate but believe me, it is worth the effort. Our job title has changed from computers to information technology. The next change might well be to communication technology. You cannot have failed to hear about the Internet. I have never seen an aspect of our work take the rest of the world by storm in quite the same way as this. I think it is fascinating in that it offers a synthesis of information and communication delivered via computers. My mail address is at the back of this issue and I have a growing number of email addresses. It is rapidly becoming easier to reach any email address from any service (which is as it should be) but I will list them anyway so you can choose the easiest route for you should you wish to send me anything.

100021.3420@compuserve.com

davidpalmer@eworld.com

ylm066 on Campus 2000

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I hope to have an RM based email address soon and suspect that it will become the one I use the most. I will print your letters or articles and will pay for anything that I use at the rate of £5 per printed page. I will also offer an extra payment for "The Letter of the Week"! I often worry about the fact that I now have more sophisticated IT tools than ever before and less time to develop ways of using them well. When I first returned to this country from Africa, I went to a conference run by Steve Heppell which had the keynote "Never Mind The Technology, Where's the Learning?". I think we could do worse than to adopt that as a motto. Please comment!

Another forum we could open is a Problem Page. Send in your questions. I have three myself and would welcome any feedback. Have any of you seen Mad Clock disease? It is a bit like Mad Mouse disease. If I hear the beep of a station that has lost its connection to the server, I go around and look at the clocks to see if they are still going. I have noticed that sometimes a clock will stop (this is only on 486/25SXs) and when I touch a key it will take off and go at about 50 times the normal speed. Resetting the station returns it to normal and there don't seem to be any ill effects. Tonight I saw a variation of this when the clock jumped up to the current time and stopped again! Problem 2 concerns "Ghost" print jobs. If a user sends a job from Winword and then presses "Cancel", the job disappears from view on the server but the next user to print will get a ghost of the first job superimposed on it. John Williams suggested a fix which worked for NetLM 1 which was to set spool=0 in rmwna.ini but this doesn't work under NetLM 1.2. Has anyone else suffered this problem? Last one concerns fatal crashes with PARITY CHECK_ on the top left hand side of the screen. It only occurs (so far) on machines with a hard disc. One of my students insists that it is a virus! Does it happen to you? Do you have any answers? Do you have any other interesting problems??

Lastly, as a new editor I believe that some people expect to see some changes since I will have my own criteria for presentation etc. I have already been dissuaded from the idea of printing "Don't Panic" in warm friendly letters on the front cover but I have had some positive feedback to the notion that we might return to an A4 format - possibly adding a colour or two. How about an RM user coat of arms? I know some of you work in schools where Latin is alive and well so how about a translation of "He who dies with the most toys wins"! In issue 9.2 the possibility of a cover disc was raised. We have a library of software and files such as worksheets which may be of use to you - if you knew what was where. Almost certain to go on such a disc would be a detailed catalogue of the library. I feel that the text archives of those issues that are on disc could be useful too if we had some easy way to search them. Once more - please comment if you have opinions on this or any matter I have raised. I have never been an editor before and I am half expecting to put my foot in it. I am not so proud that I would not welcome advice!

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Multimedia Roundup

Mary Mabey

Encarta '95 arrived in the UK last November but it is still American in bias. I gather that the '96 version will be the first with a European/British edition. A number of changes have been made to the '95design which is less flamboyant - the words "tasteful" and "restrained" come to mind! You are now given a choice of 4 screen layouts from the View menu. The space occupied by text, picture and outline can be varied from the default setting to one where the text occupies over ¾ of the screen with pictures only available when selected from an icon. The choice is yours!

Initially I was irritated by the sound effect of a mouse click every time I pointed at a menu option. As I never read instructions it took several minutes to work through the menu bar until I tried the icon. This helpfully offers a "settings" option where the clicks, opening screen and opening music can be switched off. I am also surprised whenever I start using this programme that submenus open as the mouse pointer passes over them - a rather pleasing effect of greater fluency which makes the occasions when a double mouse click is necessary seem quite cumbersome by comparison.

Some of the picture enlargement techniques used in other MS titles have been included in this upgrade and the quality of reproduction is excellent. In school I have been using Encarta alongside the text-only version of Information Finder and Software Toolworks. Students have made a concerted dash to the new title but soon become frustrated at the American bias and minimal amount of information on European topics. A search for the GNP/GDP of Luxembourg was fruitless although you could have a vastly detailed table of the GNP of American states. Larger countries are treated to a country Fact box which includes:

> general information
> education
> statistical totals for population,
> climate in January and July
> economy -where the GDP is expressed in American dollars.

Neither of the other titles manages to offend the "Euro national" to quite the same degree. (Perhaps this is because it does the US so well that it highlights the poorer European coverage) Still it's rather off-putting to look up "Woburn" and find:

> *Woburn, city, Middlesex County, northeastern Massachusetts, near Boston; incorporated as a city 1888. Machinery, medical supplies, processed food, electronic equipment, and roses are produced here. Points of interest include ..... the home (now a museum) of Loammi Baldwin, who developed the Baldwin apple....*

Saving this text to clipboard puzzled me for some minutes and I had to resort

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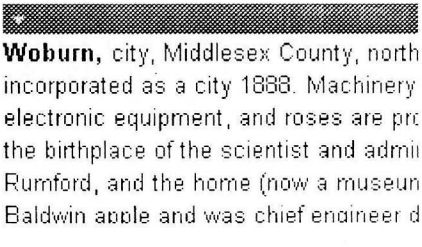
to the button for help as there is no visible on-screen "Save/copy" button. In some ways I applaud the idea to make the copy facility so discrete, as schools will save a lot of money normally invested in printer paper and ink while our students try to find the solution. In fact the operation is very simple. You merely click on the arrow and a drop down menu appears inviting you to copy or print. (You can save text, graphics and audio). I thought that MS was determined to provide intuitive software interfaces- I'm not at all sure about this discrete little grey arrow. Will the home user ever find it?


Woburn, city, Middlesex County, north
incorporated as a city 1888. Machinery
electronic equipment, and roses are pr
the birthplace of the scientist and admi
Rumford, and the home (now a museun
Baldwin apple and was chief engineer d

Of course they will, because in this redesign a downwards pointing arrow is now provided on the left hand corner of all windows to allow access to commands. You have to click on the top right hand corner where it invitingly says "close" to exit a box.

Information on the UK remains limited. A table of the administrative areas fails to include London although it is mentioned in the text. The article on British education gives statistics on school types and pupil numbers from the mid 1980's but population details for London, Birmingham etc are from the 1991 census.

Many of the original animation clips remain but some have been changed and more added. The video has been updated to include colour shots of the 1993 Mississippi floods, the repair of the Hubble telescope in 1993 and images of the 1994 South African election. The dictionary is now the American Heritage Concise Dictionary and the Thesaurus is the Roget US version. This has drawbacks but I am pleased to say that our spelling of "colour" is now acceptable although it refuses to recognise "anaemic" only "anemic"! The other drawback for educational sites is the Mind Maze quiz game to which all students become addicted.

This new edition is slicker, smoother, less strident, less pretentious than 1994. It has some good design features (especially the view options). The problem for European users is the American bias, voice-overs and illustrations. I eagerly await the arrival of the first Euro version next year. Prices vary with suppliers between £49 - £69 so shop around. There is no network licence system for MS multimedia disks. Although they are designed as standalone titles I know that Steve Rochford was able to network this edition. I am still waiting for official policy from MS on this issue.

Encarta '95 for Windows

requires

Windows 3.1

386 or higher

4MB RAM SVGA 256 colours

Soundcard and speakers

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Push-CD '95

This is the "alternative university prospectus" that all students and parents have been praying for. It comes in harsh, brash colours with cheerful designs that make it immediately attractive to sixth formers. It contains information on the matters which really concern them,

food
accommodation
entertainment
beer
ratio of men to women

There's a small section on how to apply to university and filling in the UCAS form but the main purpose of this disc is to present a short video cameo of each university so that prospective candidates no longer need to toss a coin if two universities offer the same course or spend vast sums travelling to different towns to see if they like the location. The video clips and the commentary are excellent. They show the political flavour of the student union, the sporting facilities, types of accommodation, the kind of student whom you would most likely find attracted to courses on a particular campus, the local town and the local inhabitants. You can detail factors which are important considerations to you such as age of university, ratio of men to women, location. It needs to be used in conjunction with ECCTIS as it offers little information on the courses apart from broad subject headings. My daughter found it far more informative than traditional paper prospectuses which cannot convey the "atmosphere" of individual colleges so vividly. She has already chosen the courses which she would like to follow and Push has made it easy to put the universities offering these into an order of preference. It would be far less effective to watch 10 or more video prospectuses and retain a clear idea of the differences between them. Push gets it "just right."

Push is produced by McGraw Hill

(01628 23432)

It costs £99 (£149 for a network licence)

It requires

386 or higher

Windows 3.1

4 MB RAM

SVGA 256 colours.

Soundcard and speakers

MPC level 2 is recommended

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RM User Group

Training Day

18 February 1995 at Ackworth School

CANCELLED

We have organised a Training Day at Ackworth School (near Pontefract) in February. Details are almost complete - see below. There are two main strands and there will also be RM technical support staff available for trouble-shooting clinics. The day will cost £25 and this will include lunch and coffee / tea.

At the moment we are intending to structure the day as follows:

Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa

Due to my inexperience and a series of unfortunate events, this magazine is very late and this training day has had to be cancelled. You may be interested in the chronology of The Curse of Issue 9.5. I waited until after BETT for obvious reasons. Then I went through a week of "I'll never manage it!". Then I managed it. Then on the day the printer was coming for the disc, we got snowed in. Then I got the 'flu. Then the printer got the 'flu. Then the rollers on the folding machine broke. Then a pen got posted into the paper slot on my laser printer . . .

We intend this to be the first in a series of Training Days at different venues around the country.

If you want to attend then please send a cheque for £25 made payable to RMUG to David Palmer, Ackworth School, Ackworth, Pontefract, WF7 7LT or call me on 01977 615225 to make your booking.

Directions to Ackworth School:-

From the North, East or West. Follow M62 to Junction 32. Follow signs for Pontefract. In Pontefract, follow signs for Barnsley until you see signs for Ackworth. In Ackworth you will pass the Brown Cow on your right, the school is about .75 of a mile further on the same side.

From the South. Follow A1 until you see the A639 to Pontefract. Follow this road for about three miles until you see a (small!) sign showing a left turn to Ackworth. Follow this (winding) road until you come to a T junction with a war memorial. Ackworth School is facing you at this point and you should turn right and then left past the building to find the car park.

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BETT '95

Steve Rochford

BETT is one of the biggest computing and technology exhibitions held at Olympia and it's entirely dedicated to education. I'm very lucky because I work just 2 miles from Olympia so it's easy for me to go along and see what's happening but I think it's worth making the effort to get to the show if you can. What happened this year?

RM had a big stand near the door for which they provided a map (although I didn't get round to looking at it until 3 days later!) to show the different sections. For me, one of the most interesting displays was their Internet demonstration. RM's Internet for Learning will be providing full Internet access from February and will be supplying all the necessary software to get started. I was quoted a price of £25 to sign up and then £10 per month thereafter (which is slightly more than Demon initially but Demon don't give you the same support to get you going). There are two problems that most people seem to have when considering Internet access; the first is the cost and the second is that the pupils will start exploring areas that perhaps they shouldn't. RM have addressed the cost issue by setting up a system which allows you to specify the maximum you want to spend on phone calls per month. If someone tries to dial in after this point then they are not allowed to continue so you can budget accurately for the cost of the system. The problem of access is more difficult but I understand that RM are looking at blocking access to certain areas of the Internet. I don't know how well this can work - there are so many sites on the Internet that it will be very difficult to know which of the new sites appearing every day are not suitable for schools. I would prefer to educate my pupils to use the system in a sensible fashion (but I appreciate that this is not always easy when I see the way the little dears abuse the facilities they currently have!)

Still on the Internet, NCET have a publication called "Highways for Learning" which is a book intended to give impartial advice about the Internet. It costs £7.50 from NCET (01203 416669) or it's available electronically at http://ncet.csv.warwick.ac.uk/index.html (and if you know what that means then you may not actually need the document!) NCET also have a catalogue describing all their publications and other services in detail. Windows 95 will be Microsoft's successor to Windows 3.1 and RM were showing this on network stations connecting to Net LM to make the point that they will have the product available as soon as Microsoft ship it - a welcome decision although I would have been very surprised at anything else. Windows 95 is designed to work with Lan Manager and Windows NT so if it hadn't been working I'd have been more surprised! At the moment there is no support for discless workstations and this may not come - the product is designed to be loaded from hard disc. There are all sorts of implications for schools here, especially if you have a lot of discless 486 machines. At the moment, I don't feel a need to change from Windows 3.1 so I'm not too worried!

Success Maker, RM's Integrated Learning System, had a big section of the stand and I had a good "play" with it. I was using the reading module and it kept me interested for more than 5 minutes (and I stopped because I didn't have much time to stay and play!) so I can well

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believe that if it was being used by a pupil that they would have no problem using it for the intended 10 minutes. Success Maker is apparently selling well and the schools that buy it are finding it useful. It's not cheap but it does seem to do a good job.

When Net LM was launched at BETT '92 one of the bits that was missing compared to Net 3 was a way of preventing users from using too much disc space - the program called Netdsk. This year finally sees the arrival of RM's Space Manager. It's a multi-function suite of programs which not only prevent users from logging on if they have exceeded their space allowance but allows them to copy files to and from floppy and generally do file management. It's possible to set the file manager part to prevent users copying certain kinds of file (executables, for example). One of the problems that I know my users have when I tell them to tidy up is knowing which files they can delete; my general advice is that if they've used a name that they can't remember then the file's probably not important but RM are rather more friendly - the File Organiser shows a message at the bottom of the screen to tell you (eg) that the XLS file you have clicked on is an Excel spreadsheet.

For the network administrator, Space Manager has some other features. It will tell you which users have exceeded their storage allowance (much like Chkstor should do on the server but without the trap errors!) and can also show you which users have "rogue" files (for example, EXE or GIF files) in their areas. You can allocate different amounts of space from here for all or selected users and generally do lots of file management tasks.

All the good features are, for me, spoiled by one final point - the price. Space Manager costs £349 for 16 users, rising to £945 for a site licence (but note that you do get a free mouse mat with each copy!) I know this provides greatly enhanced functionality compared to Netdsk but I can't justify spending more than £1000 (including VAT) on a utility! Fortunately there are alternatives available. Flo have an advert on the back cover for their Net Space product which offers some of the functionality of Space Manager at a rather more reasonable price - contact them on 0117 986 0885 for more details and Edhitec are selling Richard Naylor's MCB Space and File Manager programs (Edhitec are on 01423 871027). Neither of these provides the scanning functions of Space Manager but Xtree Gold does and also includes file viewers for looking at the files which you think may be suspicious.

One of the other features of Net LM mentioned at its launch was the ability to include Apple or Acorn computers on the same network. This was on show as RM's Open Network and is particularly useful if you have Macs in school because there are many applications on the Mac which have file compatibility with the same application on the PC so linking them via the network makes sharing resources much easier. A product like this needs setting up fairly carefully if you are to get the best from it but it is now available. Incidentally, Acorn now offer similar facilities and had an RM System Base on their stand as a server for part of their network! RM Direct!'s latest catalogue has just arrived including the usual selection of useful products but with an added bonus - they will now beat other suppliers' prices. There are a couple of conditions but basically this means that you can buy from RM confident that they will match any one else's price;

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a welcome development. One of the new products in the catalogue is the Microsoft Mouse 2. This is a very comfortably shaped mouse which I've now been using for the past week. I really like the feel of it but I'm not so happy yet with the new mouse driver I've installed. In Windows the mouse pointer now jumps to the default button whenever you open a dialogue box. I'm sure that this would help if you weren't used to a computer but over the years I've got used to moving the mouse to where I know the OK button (or whatever) will be. What now happens is that I start moving the mouse but Windows has already moved it so I end up on the wrong side of the screen! You can turn off this smart move feature but I'm persevering for a little longer! RM Direct! are on 01235 826216 or FreeFax on 0800 833872.

One of SPA's new products is The Well Mapped World. It's a package of 300 detailed maps including every country in the world together with information and statistics about them. It's a Windows package (and will run with Windows 3.0) so the memory problems of packages like PC Globe are avoïded. You can show latitude and longitude on the map, explore time zones and show charts from many of the statistics. The fact that it's a Windows program makes it very easy to take data from it into other programs for use there. It doesn't have quite as much information as PC Globe but it costs rather less; a single copy is just £39, rising to £147 for a secondary site licence. There's also an add on package called History and Exploration which gives a wide range of historical maps, including those from earlier this century to show some of the major political changes which have taken place. SPA are on 01684 833700. Flexible Software is another company which has been providing software for RM machines for a long time and hasn't forgotten the older computers. FlexiWrite 2 looks similar to Word for Windows but is actually a DOS program and works happily on a PC186. It shows the layout properly on screen, including fonts, and supports a range of printers. It looked impressive and could well allow you to continue using your older computers for just a bit longer. There's a range of prices depending on whether you are buying new or upgrading but the most expensive is £195 for a complete secondary site licence. It's worth noting that FlexiWrite 1 was included in the software library for RM Networks so you can upgrade from this to reduce the price even further.

SIMS were at BETT and they are now a Microsoft Solution Provider - a recognition of the fact that they are now developing Windows versions of their products. If your school uses SIMS then you'll quite possibly hate it; I used to when I had to use it regularly but then I moved to a school which uses something far worse! Now that it works in Windows I think SIMS may be much easier to use. It will certainly be simpler to get information from it into a word processor or other system. You can't yet buy the complete system for Windows but it's probably worth having a look at it if you are in the market for a new admin package for school. SIMS are on 01234 838080.

Microsoft have a new scheme for educational software licensing called Microsoft Open Licence Pack - Education. The idea is that you are not tied to buying large quantities of any one package in order to get a discount. If you want 4 copies of Excel, 4 of Access and 12 of Word then you can combine this to buy at the 20 unit cost. Microsoft no

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longer quote recommended prices for their software but this is a cheaper way to buy software (but note that you need at least one copy of the product to start with - the MOLP just gives you a license to copy, it doesn't give you the product itself). Contact Microsoft on 01734 27000 for more details of the scheme or a Microsoft dealer (such as Edhitec on 01423 871027 or Simnett's on 0181 680 3830) to find out prices.

ACITT (the National Association for Co-ordinators and Teachers of IT) are about to publish a book called Microsoft Office for Teachers. It's aimed specifically at helping you complete administrative tasks using Microsoft Office and looks like an excellent idea; there are many books that teach the use of Excel or Access in a sales office and several that are aimed at teaching simple skills to students but this is the only publication directly aimed at teachers. It's due to be launched at the ACITT conference at Newman College on 9 July; more details closer to the event. I also saw two examples of material to help with teaching Microsoft applications. FC Courseware covers Word and Excel in some detail. A pack contains a tutor's guide, OHP slides and masters, trainee guides and discs with material. The whole lot costs £149 per application and the materials can be copied for use within the purchasing establishment. Forster Computer Services are on 0181 644 1076. The Lawrenceville Press has a series of books and Teacher's Resource Packages on Works and PageMaker (among others). The Works book has sections that could easily be used as a source of ideas for teaching both Word and Excel. The packages are all priced in US dollars and are all about $40. Lawrenceville Press are on 0101 609 737 1148.

The break up of most local authority support has led to a number of companies being set up to help users of RM equipment. One of these has been formed by the staff who worked at ILECC and is now known as LETSS. They are offering to provide the same range of services that used to be offered in the days of ILEA and are also supporting the ITEM software. Contact them on 0181 850 0100. Another company that's offering to develop RM based networks is Computer Systems for Education. I don't have many details about them or what they do but you can contact them on 01235555444.

"Which University" is a new CD ROM designed to complement the existing ECCTIS package which gives information about universities (and other HE colleges) in the UK. It's more attractive visually than ECCTIS, which is just a simple text based package, and is designed to be easy to use - the whole thing has a friendly approach to helping students choose a college. Ultimately there will be a large number of multimedia prospectuses on the disc but at the moment there are only a few. Each university has had a chance to design its own and this gives a feel for the sort of image the university would like to project. There's an initial subscription offer of just £45 for the year - contact Richard Nash at Hobson Publishing on 01223354551.

British Telecom had a large stand at the show. It's worth remembering that although they are the company that many people love to hate, they do provide an extensive range of materials to support education and much of it is free. You can contact them on 0800 622302; this is also the number if you want to talk to one of their education liaison managers to find

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out how BT can work with you. BT will also be providing Internet access this year but initially it's aimed at corporate users (ie those with lots of money!) but this may change. One of the services which is worth watching is ISDN - the Integrated Services Digital Network. At the moment it's still quite expensive to install this in place of ordinary telephone lines but the price could fall further this year to the point where savings on data calls cover the cost of the line. Currently it costs £400 to install an ISDN2 line and there is a quarterly charge of £84. Talk to your local BT sales office for information about this but note that it may not help save money if you are looking for World Wide Web access; ISDN is useful because it allows you to get more data quickly. With WWW you are likely to spend more time reading the screen than getting the data, even at 14,400 bps, so going faster doesn't necessarily make it cheaper (because you are still on line paying for the call while you are reading) but it may be more attractive because you don't have to wait so long for the pictures to appear.

Clipart is the bane of my life; children love bringing it up on screen and then just printing it out. This is wasteful enough but when they don't even bother to keep their printouts it's incredibly annoying! I don't want to get rid of access to the stuff, however, because many pupils do use it sensibly so I'm always on the lookout for pictures which are more useful. Bitfolio is a collection of images with a more serious, British outlook. They're stored on the disc in CGM format (so you can read them into most Windows packages, including Word and Publisher) and the latest edition has 2000 of them. It costs £50 for a single copy or £150 for a 50 user licence. Bitfolio 6 is available from Management Graphics on 01734 353100.

If you have any M-Series machines and want to attach a CD ROM drive then your only option is to use an external drive. Cumana have just reduced the price of their Oscar drive to £212. This is a dual speed drive (which for a normal PC costs less than £100!) but with a special interface which allows you to attach it to the parallel port. Although this is expensive the portability of it means that you might be able to share it between computers (which you obviously can't do with an internal drive).A company called Statistics for Education provides a wide range of stats together with a package called Secos to allow you to investigate them. I've obviously missed a number of upgrades because they're now up to version 3 for DOS and there's an Excel version as well. The latter looks really good; it's based on a series of clever macros which read the data files and allow you to graph them using Excel's charting facilities. It needs Excel 4 or later (remember that if you have Net LM you are licenced to use Excel 4) and there is a demonstration disc available. More information on 01279 652183. I keep promising myself that I'll learn how to make attractive menus and such like in Excel; if you've never seen what can be done then the demo is a good example of what you can achieve. I think it's worth travelling to London for the show; there's a lot to see and lots of stands with very helpful people. The latter point is important because shows often have stands staffed with sales people who can smile and hand out leaflets but really know little about the product. BETT has a few stands like this but most of the stands are small and staffed by people who know what's going on. Finally, BETT '96 takes place from 10-13 January 1996 at Olympia. There's a tube

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station at Olympia but a more interesting route is to take a tube to Hammersmith and then catch a bus the short distance to the exhibition hall.

I certainly agree with Steve about this strange habit of needing to print out clipart - and not even take the copy so produced. The other thing that drives me mad - and our school does not have a problem with vandalism - is the casual destruction of my mousemats. The top surface gets peeled away from the backing and the one or two pads I have picked up at shows which are securely bonded get eaten away at the corners. I could understand it if the computer room was used for detentions but usually it is a room where the students are at ease.

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Micro Mart

*15 * Brand New & Boxed PC186 IBM Mode Utility Boards @ £30 each or all for £400. (Cost £99 each new from RM).*

NewSPAper for PC186 (works on 286/ 386 or any RM machine with PC186 support), Version 1.9 - £40 (cost £79).

SPA Page and Picture Porter, and SPA Screen Saver, cost over £20 each sell both for £30.

*5 * Central Point Commute software, offers. Boxed and unregistered.*

PC186 External 5.25" floppy drive + connectors, badged Cumana £30

PC186 BBC Parrallel/User port card, £69 new, sell for £25. Juki 6100 Daisywheel printer, £40.

Also Various bits - PC186 power supplies, RAM, components etc. and also a selection of non-working modern harddisk drives for spares or repair. All software with appropiate disk media and manuals. First come...

Contact - Stephen Sharrad, 10 Gainsborough Hill, Henley-On-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1ST (01491) 577149.

The following Hardware is available from Highfields School in Wolverhampton. You are welcome to visit and inspect it after 3:15 Monday to Thursday. Contact Stuart Stockley on 0902333186

<u>IT Equipment in good working order.</u>

1xChain Server (plus software) £50

14x480Z micros, suitable for network or standalone £25 each

4xMicrovitec Colour Monitors for above £30 each

4xTatung Colour Monitors for above £25 each

Numerous B/W Monitors for above £10 each

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In addition we have 15 MFA Computer Control Modules which can be plugged into the back of the 480Z's to teach the fundamentals of programming and control, plus 2 Lego Buggies and an assortment of sensors. For sale as a boxed set at £400.

<u>IT Equipment not working but serviceable</u>

1xChain Server (suitable for spares) £10

4x480Z micros (suitable for spares) £5 each

1xMicrovitec Colour Monitor (possibly in need of a fuse?) £5

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THE CLASSROOM, SCIENCE LAB OR THE BIG OUTDOORS

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Psion 3FAX/Modem Link* could be used to gain access to on-line information services, establish communication with other schools, home and abroad.

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* For use with Psion Series 3a 512K only

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Tel: 01235 826868

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M. L. Porter, Network Manager, Gravesend Grammar School for Girls, Gravesend

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Julie Heath, IT Technician/Network Manager, Simon Langton Girls' School, Canterbury

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Truly Personal Computing: The Power of the Palmtop

Summary of NCET Portable Computers Pilot. Janet Wilson - RM Distribution

Portable computing is one of the areas tipped to be a big issue in the coming year. Thanks to a recent study carried out by the NCET there is now a body of evidence to support schools which are considering portables as a part of their IT strategy. The study unearthed promising opportunities and revealed some interesting side effects.

One particular success story was the Palmtop. Palmtops are handheld PC's with wordprocessing, spreadsheet and database capabilities. Several of the schools allocated Palmtops had to rethink their chosen projects but initial misgivings were quickly overcome. For pupils accustomed to handheld games consoles the size was unintimidating and familiar. The simplicity of the technology allowed pupils to get on with it very quickly, in many cases providing a useful bridge to the technology of desktop systems.

It is interesting to note that teachers involved in the study were very quick to claim a Palmtop for their own purposes. A primary teacher in Cheltenham said of hers "It's the best thing since sliced bread, I just couldn't be without it". This enthusiasm is not unusual; planning lessons, recording student achievements and performance, and of course personal organisation are all made much easier. Significantly, users feel that reports are enhanced by the opportunity to record behaviour/attainments instantly.

Back in the classroom, the portability and size of the Palmtop means that with a reasonable amount of thought, they can be incorporated into everyday activities.

English and Humanities. *Pupils felt that their Palmtop reduced the frustration of endless redrafting. There were indications that pupils tended to become more adventurous in their expression and focused on the content. By and large, the confidence to produce a piece of written work increased noticeably.*

At this stage it is important to stress that the study by no means limited itself to using the Palmtops as wordprocessors. By contrast, where pupils were encouraged to collect background information on the computers, either in the class or out in the field, they tended to draw on more evidence to support interpretations and conclusions. One literature class even produced a database of the characters in Macbeth to help their Shakespeare studies. For field trips nothing offers more freedom for data collection than a Palmtop. Hardware and software are available to enable remote sensing and logging, but even without these, the Palmtop is an invaluable piece of equipment.

Science. *The use of a portable during experiments added a new dimension for many pupils. Data produced and analysed in the spreadsheet was effectively brought to life and helped pupils develop a clearer understanding of the concepts under investigation. In some cases, unexpected results prompted students to explore even further - encouraging an intuitive and logical approach to their studies.*

Modern Languages. *Stuart France of the NCET believes that one of the Palmtop's greatest stengths is its ability to motivate, "Teachers report reversals of negative attitudes to subjects, for instance French, where computers have until recently had little impact." Access to IT enabled*

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students to write for a purpose, for example one school produced a guide book on their local town for a French partner school. There is also software available which allows the exploration of words and phrases allowing development at a more individual pace.

This article barely touches on the many issues raised by the study. There are a number of management issues which need to be considered, but with careful planning the benefits are unlimited. One noticeable effect of the continuous access to IT was an ability developed by many students to select when it was appropriate to use IT. This is doubtlessly a significant step towards integrating IT into the curriculum rather than lessons into IT.

A series of reports detailing the study are available from the NCET, tel: 01203 416994.

I can share some of this enthusiasm. I have for a long time been an Agenda user and I am still very sad that the company bit the dust. Microwriting (using only 5 keys) still seems to me the most elegant way of getting text into a Palmtop. In deed I believe the Newton might have got off to a better start if it had had five Microwriting keys on the back. My current Agenda is starting to show warning signs that it is about to bite the dust. I know about these things becasue this is Agenda number 3! I have been told that it is very bad form to write with exclamation marks (be warned that it is VERY bad form to write in caps on the Internet) and to break up your sentences with parentheses. I apologise but cannot imagine how to communicate without these vulgar ruses. Anyway, I have just got a Psion 3a and it is a fine wee beastie. I am in the process of introducing it to a desktop. (You allow them to sniff each other first...) When this link is running I expect most of what I have printed here will have gone through the tiny keys first. Certainly, all my previous copy went through the Agenda and would probably never have existed without it. I am no great note-taker but find it very practical to have in my pocket the means of writing articles, letters, notes, phonenumbers and reminders. There is a Psion Users Group, 01752 262627, and I hope we will be making friends with them. They have a bulletin board, 01752 894422 and for £25 pa you can have unlimited access and technical help over the phone.

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Letters

Downe House School,

Cold Ash,

Newbury

01635200286

Dear Editor,

having come from industry into education by turning an interest into a ob with the help of a two year part-time HNC, July 1993 was a giant and lonely leap. Not only had I not run a network before but I was expected to install it ready for September. Had I known that such a thing as the RM user group existed and could give me lots of FREE hands-on advice I would have made it my first contact. Having survived a nightmare of NetLM 1.2 and various upgrades, new network cards, faulty cabling and bleeping death with only the RM Help Desk as my guide and eventual saviour (having with-held payment for a year). I came looking for further fonts of knowledge. RM gave me an old address in London for Ian Burgess in early 1993, and since I didn't get an answer the search was forgotten in the back-log of work. Then Control was added to the syllabus and I needed to get a pre-release version of Logicator working on NetLM 2.0 (with the approval of Economatics I hasten to add). The Economatics guy informed me that at the RM user group training weekend the previous week the problem had been solved. "Ha!", I said "Where can I find these Guru's?". "One of them was an RM engineer"., he said "but I don't know any of their names". Having interogated half of RM's sales and technical support staff for several days, I finally tracked down a copy of the MTSL script and brief instructions on how to get it working (in fact I got 3 copies from 3 different people). So at the eleventh hour, just before the class, Logicator was working. Weeks later I rang Flo to ask about their software and in a very refreshing conversation I was told where to find the font of more RM knowledge.

So at last I have found you all! I am no longer alone! Although I have three very friendly teaching staff in the computing department they are all too busy teaching for in-depth problem solving discussions. Being the only computing technician means that visiting RM engineers are subject to a barrage of questions eased by the copious cups of tea, sandwiches and cake and on some occasions lunch (the food at school is excellent, the trouble is I've put on a stone!).

Having made contact I seek more..... My nearest contact and the cheapest phone call away is Maidenhead. Do you have a group of RM users in my area? If not, why not? Then I can start one. Your idea of local training sessions is great and helps to reduce the cost of a trip (and for those who are parents, you don't have the nightmare of child care for the weekend). The other benefit of a regional group is to share ideas, see how someone else has set up and run their hardware before you buy your next set of problems. I also get the chance to pass on ideas to my very busy teaching staff who don't have time to read a magazine let alone a newsletter.

That time factor again!

I look forward to the next edition of the User Group magazine and shall certainly be pestering for the funds to

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Ijoin you all on the next training weekend. Problem free computing to you all,

Haeley Peach

I am delighted to print Haeley's letter and I can add to it that her school is considering adopting the strategy that every child joining the school will be issued with a laptop. She wants to know if any of you have had experience with large numbers of laptops and how you managed access to central resources. Someone has suggested that they simply have access to printers but she (quite rightly in my opinion) feels that it should be possible to "dock" and be able to back up files and share printers from a network. If you have anything to say please either call her directly or write to me so I can print a response

RM User Group Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 18 March 1995 at theNovotel, Stevenage.

After the AGM there will be a number of presentations; two of which we are pleased to announce will be:

- *Research Machines on the future of networks in schools*
- *The Internet - what is it, how do I use it, why should I use it?*

RM User Group Training Weekend 1995

Although our last weekend is not long past, we're planning the next one so make a note in your diary of the date and start putting requests in for money from your Inset budget.

Date: *20-22 October 1995 (provisional)*

Venue: *Novotel, Nottingham*

Price: *£250 (provisional)*

Nottingham is a busy city with lots to do both in the city and its environs for spouses/ partners who are not interested in computers. Your partner can stay in your room (all rooms have double beds) for no extra charge although please not that the hotel will charge for any meals taken.

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What's Online

David Palmer

Compuserve has been around for a long time and has a lot of services and a lot of members. In fact its services are literally too many to mention. There is a monthly magazine designed mainly to try and make the mebers aware of what is on-line. It has made a significant attempt to provide local data and you can easily download English news, weather and even what's on TV. The AA now have a section on roadworks. This is a Good Idea but I found the chronological listing less useful than one organised by road or region. I have got genuinely useful information from forums - in one case solving a technical hitch with a scanner that HP couldn't or wouldn't help with. The speed of response to a cry for support can be awesome and I do like the feeling you get when a total stranger from the other side of the world reaches out to help.

Campus 2000 is a service sponsored by BT. Talking about BT sponsorship, I heard that they had offered to put a fibre optic connection into every school in the country for nothing - well actually for what they call the chance to play on a level pitch. They want permission to offer video on demand down the phone. After all, cable TV companies have been allowed (some would say encouraged) to offer phone services to their customers. I can't claim to know all the angles on this one but I have a horrible suspicion that we will miss out on this possibly dramatically important offer and that BT will end up getting what it wants some other way. Campus has had a lot of stick over its clunky interface and expensive costs. They tackled the latter by slashing their prices and say that a new interface will be here real soon now. They defend their reluctance to change by saying that they have always supported the lowest common user. There are soon to be two new players in this arena that are of particular interest to us. Microsoft have caused a furore about looking even more set to take over the world when they launch their online service codenamed Marvel. Connectability will be built in to Windows 95. Considering their resources, this should mean that the other players should abandon the game but in real life the sheer size of their programming teams often seems to lead to the most cumbersome solution. RM are going online too. I am particularly looking forward to this. They are setting up a WWW server and if you sign up you will be able to access their home page which already has a lot of pointers to sites of particular educational interest. As well as being genuinely impressed by their setup, I hope that your user group is about to take a major step in terms of communication by getting a home page connected to RM's. I believe that some records must have been broken by the number of column inches devoted to the Internet. I hope to run an article about its history because it is interesting and relevant. But it is the World Wide Web that will "bring the Internet to the masses". Actually it would probably be more accurate to say that it will bring the masses to each other. Let us pray that most of it will manage to stay as accessible as it is now and not get commercialised. RM will offer a fixed fee per month for access with no charge for access time. They will restrict your account to an agreed figure (eg 3 hours per week) in order to protect you from huge phone bills. They may develop a filter to allow you to control which sites are within reach.

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RM Lan Manager Applications

DESKTOP SELECTOR

Desktop Selector enables users to switch between different 'desktops' without the need to logoff. This helps with the overall efficiency of your network by reducing unnecessary network traffic.

FONT MANAGER

We all know that 'TrueType' fonts are fantastic, when installed they allow the use of a wide range of decorative fonts for all situations from WILD WEST to CHRISTMAS to just plain WEIRD. However the availability of a large number of these fonts on a network present a very serious problem. If users are to load all font definitions automatically at log-on, the time taken to sign-on is increased considerably and network efficiency suffers dramatically. The answer to this problem is ***Font Manager.*** Font Manager consists of a suite of three windows applications which allow the use of your TrueType fonts in an efficient and sensible manner.

Lan Mail

Many institutions have a need for an internal E-Mail system and although there are many such systems available, most are very expensive and only work for a limited number of users. Lan Mail is an internal E-Mail system and is a quality Windows product designed to run on RM Lan Manager 2 networks. For this type of application it is a relatively inexpensive software package and is able to work with a large number of users.
In this modern age where electronic communication is of growing importance it is essential for all students to be aware of E-Mail systems and to experience the use of such a system first-hand.

Price Guide

Desktop Selector (per server)	£ 35
Font Manager (per server)	£ 75
Special Offer:	
Desktop Selector and Font Manager together (per server)	£100
Font Manager - standalone version (per computer)	£ 35
Further licences for standalone version (per computer)	£ 5
Lan Mail Server + 500 User Licence	£200
Lan Mail Server + 1000 User Licence	£285
Lan Mail Server + 1500 User Licence	£350
Each additional 500 User Licence after 1500 Users	£ 50

The purchase of any of the above 'Lan Mail' packs covers the complete site of the institution up to the specified number of users.

Upgrades after the initial purchase for each extra 500 User Licence	£ 85

This option requires you to return your 'Master Disk(s)'.

Lan Mail minimum system requirements: 386/16sx 4Mb VGA Windows 3.1

NB Lan Mail is still under development and is expected to be available during February 1995. Please call for availability.

Please note that although these prices include postage and packaging they exclude V.A.T.

MWA SOFTWARE, Helston School, Church Hill, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8NR. Telephone:(01326) 572133
Fax: (01326) 572183

Downloads

*One thing you **will** find online is humour. I have a collection of these but I couldn't resist this one from Steve's files. Perhaps I should also say that one thing you may well need to get online is a sense of humour! I read an article recently that started off "Those of us who come into contact with computers in our daily jobs will inevitably encounter memory problems." "How true" I thought, "I can't remember more than three items for more than five minutes" - and then the article went on to talk earnestly about EMS vs XMS and I realised that I had missed the boat again. I am still harbouring more than a suspicion that use of a PDA has done to my mind what velcro has done to our childrens' ability to tie knots.*

Physicists at Harwell have discovered the heaviest element known to science, named Administratum. The new element has no protons or electrons, and has an atomic number of zero. However, it does have one neutron, eight assistant neutrons, ten executive neutrons, 35 vice neutrons and 258 assistant vice neutrons. Administratum has an atomic mass of 311+, since the neutron is only detectable half of the time. Its 312 particles are held together by a force which involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles, called morons. Since it has no electrons, Administratum is completely inert. Nevertheless, its presence can be detected because it impedes every reaction with which it comes into contact. One experiment, which should have lasted only a few days, is still running after 2+ years due to the addition of just one milligramme of Administratum. It is weakly active, and has a normal half-life of approximately six months. After this time, it does not actually decay, but undergoes a metamorphosis in which assistant neutrons, executive neutrons, vice neutrons and assistant vice neutrons exchange places. This almost invariably leads to an increase in atomic weight, hence it is self-sustaining. Although it occurs widely, Administratum tends to concentrate around large corporations, research laboratories and government departments. It can especially be found in recently re-organised sites, and there is reason to believe that it is heavily involved in the processes of deforestation and global warming. It should be remembered that Administratum is known to be toxic at all concentrations, and can easily destroy any productive reactions where it is allowed to accumulate. Numerous attempts have been made to determine how Administratum can be controlled to prevent irreversible damage, but results to date are not promising.

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Technical Tips

Stephen Sharrad

Point of View

I have been contacted several times recently regarding the obtaining of monitors for PC186 computers. Several secondary schools are now receiving equipment which has been passed down from colleges etc..

It is interesting to note that the PC186 monitor is a standard CGA monitor but with a different signal connector. However, it is possible to construct a small adaptor to go between the PC186 colour output socket and a standard IBM CGA monitor 25-way D-type connector. The connections are shown in the accompanying diagram. For some monitors it may be necessary to change the synchronization type; more about this in a moment.

It is also possible to use a 480z (remember them?) style monitor (the CUB type also used with elderly BBC micros etc) on a PC186 but unfortunately these monitors only display eight colours and therefore light and dark versions of the same colour on a PC186 (e.g. light and dark cyan) appear as the same colour (light cyan). This may not be a problem but the synchronization type of the PC186 will need to be changed.

If the cover to the PC186 is removed then on most models (excluding some early models and also 102 key systems) there will be a six pin jumper block located on the right-hand side of the mainboard as the machine faces forward. There will be two bird links both arranged horizontally and BOTH of these are moved over to the opposite side to change synchronization. The links must NOT be arranged vertically otherwise upon the next power-up your mainboard will end up resembling like an overcooked pizza. Most issues of the owners handbook contain more information on how to change the links over but the information is contained in an addendum in the front as the information printed in the appendix talks about a slideswitch which does not actually exist on virtually all issues of the PC186 mainboard.

It is also possible to connect a PC186 to a TV with a peritel SCART input. An adaptor is required which includes a PCB and I have not yet been able to fully test this method.

Up to Grade

Food intake as a percentage of requirement- dark areas represent higher percentages (with black representing more than 150%)

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Some readers in the past may have purchased an IBM Mode Utility board. For those of you who are not familiar with the IBM utility board, this board fits into the co-processor socket on the mainboard and provides several useful functions. These include sound in IBM mode (useful if your trying to compose music!), a real-time clock (so the computer counts the day and time even with the computer turned off) and better overall IBM compatibility when used in SETPC IBM mode.

However, some users have found that the utility board supplied by RM will not work in their machine because their PC186 is too old. If the computer's serial number has a prefix of 01, 02 or 07 then the main board will need modifying to accommodate the utility board. The upgrade, however, should only be carried out by someone reasonably competent (beats me why they let me do it...) as you could quite easily ruin either the computer or yourself.

The upgrade basically involves soldering a small link underneath the mainboard from Pin 68 of IC35 (the 80186) to Pin 11 of J15 (the co-processor socket to which the utility board is fitted). The next and final part of the upgrade is harder: The CPU (the main chip, the 80186 or IC35) must be replaced with an Intel version. If an AMD (AMD are a company who clone or make replicas of Intel chips) version is fitted this will cause the machine to start booting and freeze when the MSDOS signon screen appears.

If the IC is fitted inside a convenient clamp-down device (a small clip releases pressure on the socket and the IC can be removed) then the chip may be replaced if you can find an Intel version in the same type of package. Most chips of this type are in PLCC (Plastic leaded chip carrier) types which have small pin-contacts and the IC sits in a more conventional looking socket, rather than the clamp-down gold-leaf contact type. However, some chips may be found in old printers (such as the DEC LN03) where the AMD version may be substituted.

Before you power up the computer next time check that the following jumpers are set on the mainboard: The two jumpers next to C35 must be linked in the right-hand position and the jumper above IC31 must be in the left-hand position. Make a note of any changes you make before you do them and make sure that the computer is put back together properly. If you are not using a standard Nimbus monitor then the link above IC31 may need adjusting.

The above upgrade should also allow a co-processor to be used on the utility board. Note that machines with the serial number prefix 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 19, or 24 will simply need the CPU replacement as described above, and prefixes 1,2 and 7 will need all modifications. Prefixes 16, 21 or 26 however also need further modifications which I have not yet been able to discover.

On one last note on this subject if anybody would like to obtain 1 or more new IBM Utility boards then please contact me - my address is in the back.

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False Alarm

Somebody the other day alarmed me by saying that a 486DX ISA BIOS was fitted to their 486 SX 25 machine. This, however, is quite legal because the BIOS will recognise that the CPU is only an SX. However, a DX BIOS is fitted in case at some stage you make the upgrade to a newer processor.

The BIOS (Basic Input/Output system thingee) is a set of machine code instructions held in ROM which control the generic functions of the computer, not least of which is what it makes the computer say at turn on!

Age before Beauty

This January marks the 10th Anniversary of the PC186. (Doesn't time fly when you're enjoying yourself). The PC186 is obviously hopelessly obsolete for new software but this does not mean that it is only fit for the dustbin. True, it only has 1MB of memory in RM mode and 0.7MB of RAM in IBM mode (excluding the 0.5MB of optional memory, normally used for a disk cache or ramdisk; however, this memory can be made directly addressable very easily, taking RAM in IBM mode to well over 1 MB).

The PC186, however, still runs Word for DOS (version 3 or version 4 if Utility board is present) very well, or Word for Windows 1. It is worth bearing in mind that these programs will still be adequate for most users needs. Excel 2 is still comprehensive enough to produce excellent results, and CorelDraw 2 on a PC186 still has enough options and menus to get me completely lost. In the next magazine I hope to have ready an article with some suggestions on what you can do with your roomful of 186's and also a bit of a closer look at RM.

I am a great fan of Paint. This is a Windows 2 program (did you keep those discs?) and has nice pattern fills and an interesting isometric 3D drawing tool. Since it is only black and white it is incredibly fast and is ideal for diagrams to cut and paste into your writing. Another example of only using enough power.

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Shop Talk

David Palmer

I have just got hold of a fast (14400 - well it seems fast to me after 1200!) modem and hooked it up. I installed the software and away it went. This may not seem remarkable - I am sure it happens to a lot of you all the time - but I think it is one of the first times that I have added something relatively complex with so little fuss. I had actually put it off for four dyas till I had a couple of hours relatively clear just in case. Of course it may have been something to do with the sacrificial spilling of blood earlier on when I was running the phone extension leads across the room. I am always worried if I do any DIY without some (preferrably small) drop of blood being offered to the gods that live in such things. Once online, I started with Compuserve which I discovered to now be both vocal and multitasking. The latter was most impressive and I found that I could look up file listings and descriptions while other files were being transferred in the background. This is definitely a Good Thing. Although everyone says they are the most expensive, I still think they have the best interface and the number of special interest areas is mindblowing. If you want to know more about them call 0800 289378. If you decide to join then please say I sent you because they will give me free connect time! Elsewhere I have printed a download from the WUGNET (Windows User Group) area. This is probably a good place to start and I can recommend WIZART.ZIP, a sort of electronic Spirograph. I have a clear leader in the Heroes collection, Stephen in the Ecctis support team who called me three times to follow up a problem, then dispatched new discs overnight to make sure the problem was solved.

I have been experimenting with some Yamaha kit. It was interesting that although they were not exhibiting at BETT, they had a huge number of bits of kit around the place. I have a Tone Generator, CBX\T3 and a bit of software called Visual Arranger. The former allows you to output high quality multichannel MIDI sound and the latter lets you create it in a very easy manner. Basically you drag and drop bits of backing music until you have a nice background track and then you can play along with it either using the computer keyboard and preset groups of samples or with a MIDI keyboard. You can record your efforts and then play it all back through a very sophisticated on-screen mixer. My students really liked it and since the RRP is only £39, my own resevation about the fact that you can't select your own combinations of samples seem churlish! I have heard that Yamaha kit is going to be available via RM and their new range of powered speakers looks very impressive. 0908 366700

Did you hear that there is a mathematical fault in the Pentium chip? There are lookup tables in the chip and one or two of the values are wrong. Allegedly Intel knew about this as early as last summer but didn't let on until late autumn when it was publicised on the Internet by an American math(s) professor. Then they (allegedly) came out with the most ridiculous statements that (a) "It was only a very small mistake (in the 4th decimal place), (b) it didn't happen very often and (c) it wasn't our fault since the chip was tested to IEEE standards 754 and 854. This has led some pundits to ask what sound an IEEE standard makes in a plane designed using a Pentium chip - AAAAAAHHH-EEEEEEEEE!!!

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WINDOWS Tips and Tricks

A download of the top tips from WUGNET

Use Sysedit for configuration changes to your autoexec.bat, config.sys, win.ini, and system.ini files. This utility will make a backup copy of the configuration files (with a .syd extension). You won't have to remember to make a copy of these files before altering. To use this utility: Select the program group where you want the icon to be. Select file, new, program item, OK. Then type Sysedit under description, tab to command line and type sysedit.exe. Choose OK. You should now have an icon labeled Sysedit.

Set ReservePageFrame=off in the [386Enh] section of the System.ini if you don't use expanded memory for any of your DOS applications.

To stop the annoying confirmation boxes in File Manager select the Options menu, then Confirmation, deselect to clear boxes, then choose OK.

To copy the contents of the active window to the Clipboard, press Alt and PrintScreen.

To start an application minimized to an icon, while Windows is running, hold down the Shift key while double-clicking on the applications icon.

To set up a DOS prompt in a window (when running 386 enhanced mode), create a PIF file calling COMMAND.COM, and check the windowed box under Display Usage.

When you press an alpha key in a program group, Windows selects the next program item that begins with that letter. (i.e., skip from Calculator to Calendar to Cardfile, by tapping the C key.)

To save your configuration, after resizing windows and getting the "right look", hold the shift key down and exit windows. You won't actually exit windows, your setup will be saved, and you can continue your work. To keep the same "look" , in Program Manager, under Options, turn off the Save Settings on Exit Choice (a check mark means "on", no check mark means "off").

If you keep the Print Manager iconized you can easily drag a file from the File Manager and have it printed without having to load the application.

If you have 8MB or more of extended memory create a RAM disk. This will put temporary files, such as Print Manager's spool files, into RAM instead of on disk, giving you a noticeable performance boost. Use Ramdrive.sys to create the RAM disk (see your DOS manual for directions). Add lines Set Temp=e:\ (where e:\ is your RAM disk's drive letter) and Set Tmp=e:\ to your Autoexec.bat file.

To avoid loading any programs in your Startup Group hold the Shift key down as Windows starts (when the copyright logo comes on screen).

The Mouse section of Control Panel now offers a feature called Mouse Trails that leaves a temporary trail on your screen as you move the pointer. This is especially useful on notebooks.

In the File Manager, when copying or moving files the default arrangement for more than one window when tiled is one above the other. To force the windows to display side-by-side hold the shift key down while selecting Window, Tile.

To customize the fonts used to display

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information in a File Manager window, select Font from the Option menu. This opens a dialog box that lists your font display options.

Double clicking on the Title Bar will minimize or maximize a window.

To quickly switch between open applications in Windows 3.1, hold down the ALT key and press the TAB key at the same time. To display the application icon and name for any open applications, repeatedly press the TAB key while holding down the ALT key. To open the displayed application, release the ALT key.

To quickly switch between full-screen and windowed display while using an MS-DOS-based application, simply press ALT+ ENTER.

To open a dialog box listing all the open applications on your system, hold down the CTRL key and press the ESC key. The Task List is handy for closing or switching applications.

These settings can be modified in the advanced settings section of the Ports dialog box accessed through the Control Panel.

To display the contents of more than one drive or directory at once using the new File Manager, double-click the drive icon to open an additional window for that drive, and select the Tile command from the Window menu.

To set up or remove Windows components (accessories, games) after you have installed Windows 3.1, open the Windows Setup application located in the Main group, and select Options from the Setup menu. The dialog box presents information about which optional Windows components are installed and how much disk space they are using. Select the Help button or press F1 for more information.

To use your mouse to copy from an MS-DOS based application running in a window, from the application's Control menu select the Edit, Mark command. With Windows 3.1 you can then use the mouse to highlight the area of text you want to copy. Return to the Control menu, then select Edit, Copy to copy the highlighted area of text to the Clipboard. The data can then be pasted into an application for either MS-DOS or Windows.

To run a tutorial that teaches the basics of using a mouse and Windows, choose the Windows Tutorial command from the Help menu in the Program Manager.

To insert special characters not found on your keyboard into your document, use the new Character Map application in the Accessories group. Double-click on the Character Map icon, and a dialog box displays different characters for the font specified. After selecting the character you want, simply press the Select and Copy buttons to place the desired characters in the Clipboard. From the Clipboard, the special character can be pasted into your document.

To assign sounds to different system and application events--for example to play a sound whenever you start Windows--open the Control Panel and choose the Sound icon. In the Events list, select the event that you want to assign a sound to, and in the Files list, select the sound file you want to use. To hear the sound, choose the Test button or double-click the event or filename. Choose the OK button. You must have either a sound card or the Microsoft PC Speaker driver for this tip to work.

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Your Magazine

I make no apologies for leaving this page as it is since I agree with every word!

I really do welcome items for the magazine from anyone. You don't have to be a great writer to send something in; send a letter or a short tip for the Hints and Tips pages, everything is welcome. If you want to phone and talk something over then please do; even if you aren't sure how to write something down then I can always include your ideas in Hints and Tips or as a plea for help; some of you will recognise your phone calls on the Hints and Tips pages!

I would be particularly pleased to hear from the people who are using RM computers at home; there are quite a lot of you out there. Some of you will be experienced at working with computers and I would be interested to know why you chose RM for home use. Others will have responded to RM's advertising, perhaps because your children use the same computers at school. How are you getting on with your new machine? Did you have any problems getting started? It doesn't matter if you still don't know the answer to the problem- this is how you'll find out - and it doesn't matter if you think that your problem was trivial; remember that there are many other people who are going to be in exactly the same position as you and will welcome the help that you can give.

If you are writing for me then the ideal is to send me a disc produced using Word or Word for Windows but I can cope with any word processor that runs on a PC or Nimbus (I think). If what you are sending is short then a letter on good old fashioned paper is fine. I can also accept articles left on the bulletin board - the easiest way to to do this is to prepare your article in a word processor and save it normally. You then send a short e-mail to me and attach your file to it when you are on-line. It's actually easier to do than to describe because the whole thing is menu driven.

Finally, we pay for published articles at the rate of £5 per printed page (although all payments are at the Editor's discretion).

Advertising in the Magazine

Full and half page advertisements can be placed in the magazine and details can be obtained from the Advertising Manager. We also take classified ads and members may place free ads for surplus equipment in MicroMart.

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Please use capitals

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I enclose a cheque payable to RMUG/order for £18. If you are not enclosing a cheque then please send an official order, indicating clearly to whom the invoice should be sent.

In order to serve our members better we like to know something about them and what they do with their computers. The information you give is confidential and we are registered as Data Users under the Data Protection Act.

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Yes ☐ *No* ☐

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